

## Counselling & Disability Services – Information and self-help sheets

### DEALING WITH CONFLICTS

People have different needs, values, interests and concerns. It is not a question whether that's right or wrong. It is a question of whether we are willing to verbalise them and how we do so. Lack of awareness of these differences can often result in a clash of goals. Sometimes the differences are not obvious and we don't even recognise they exist.

Arguments result when we are convinced that our opinion is right and we focus on providing reasons to push our point of view. At the beginning of a rising conflict we often meet moments of argument. It can be healthy to argue and to discuss options because it clears the air between people, ensures everyone knows each other's position, and provides opportunities for change.

A conflict is a disagreement between two or more persons whereby one person perceives a threat to their needs, values, interests, concerns. Communication takes place on two levels, rational and emotional. The rational level consists of all facts, while the emotional level is comprised of our values, needs, interests, and concerns underlying the surface. Every one interprets messages differently and sends messages differently; therefore the potential for misunderstanding and confusion is high.

Often arguments start because we haven't begun by stating our own interests or values. This is also often the case when we are asked to define the issues.

In order to prevent conflicts it is important that we understand our own responses and are aware of our values, interests, needs, and concerns. If we are able to clearly communicate these needs we are likely to be able to prevent conflicts. It is also important to ensure that we address our issues with the person whom it concern. If we are able to use even just one of these strategies we will be better able to prevent conflict and resolve the issues with the person in question.

#### **General tips**

- Recognise your own behavioural style.
- Recognise your upcoming feelings.
- Remind yourself it comes from your perception and be prepared that other people probably do not see an issue.
- Know about your hot buttons and warnings signs.
- Acknowledge your judgements and separate them from the other person you are in conflict with.
- Keep going improving your communication and conflict resolution skills.
- Take your time to respond. Have one sleep overnight, or bye time to prepare yourself.
- Do not wait for so long before you address your concerns.
- It is both your right and responsibility to have your say.
- Respect other people's right as well to have their say.
- Treat each other with respect and respect confidentiality.

### **Before you respond**

- Become awareness of your needs, concerns, interests, goals and values.
- Consider importance of the issue and the working relationship.
- Separate the issue from the person.
- Do not make assumptions on other people needs.
- Tackle problems as early as possible.
- Get professional advice to get a third perspective.
- Look up further information on conflicts, grievance, and complaints.
- Be willing to change.
- Make a decision to clarify the matter and to solve the problem.
- Set up a time to talk to the person you want to and set up the venue.
- Take a deep breath before you raise your issue.

### **How to respond?**

- Speak only on your behalf.
- Communicate your own needs and feelings.
- Do not blame other people, or confront them in public.
- Pay attention to other people's view.
- Listen for upcoming ideas to solve the matter, or to improve dealing with difficulties.
- Take notes to follow up.
- Use the person's name.
- Repeat important points.
- Give the other time to respond.
- Do not interrupt one another.
- Do not finish other person's sentence.

### **Day to Day Skills in Conflict Communication**

- Use I Statements to speak from your point of view and on your behalf.
- Be assertive to have your say.
- Be an active listener to separate the issue from the person and to explore underlying feelings, needs etc. of the other person.
- Ask questions for clarification not for justification.

### **Professional Skills in Conflict Resolution**

- Facilitation
- Negotiation
- Mediation
- Arbitration
- Litigation

**And don't forget it is okay to make mistakes!**

**Talk - Talk – Talk +++ Buy time +++ Have a break  
Get advice +++ Take a deep breath**

**Please contact the CDS**

- Get professional advice in dealing with conflicts as well as use the CDS if you need a Mediator to solve a conflict.
- Ask for further information on conflict counselling or mediation.
- Attend workshops related to dealing with conflicts, or assertiveness (register online).
- Address any further training request. The Counselling Service also offers developing conflict trainings for your area.

**Resources**

Counselling Service

Email: [counselling@curtin.edu.au](mailto:counselling@curtin.edu.au)

Phone: (08) 92667850

Fax: (08) 92663052

Website: <http://counselling.curtin.edu.au/>

Liz Halsmith

Mediation and Resolution Officer

Email: [Liz.Halsmith@curtin.edu.au](mailto:Liz.Halsmith@curtin.edu.au)

Phone: (08) 9266 7454

Fax: (08) 9266 2768

Website: <http://complaints.curtin.edu.au/>